
The American RECORD GUIDE

1304
formerly The American Music Lover



Edited by

PETER HUGH REED

September, 1945 • VOL XII, No. 1

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THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

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September, 1945 VOL. XII, No. 1

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Editorial Notes

The first plastic, non-breakable phonograph record was demonstrated to the press on August 29 in the RCA Victor Record Division offices in Radio City, New York. Some of our readers may remember that we reported in 1942 that a plastic record would be released after the war. In May 1942 Mr. Frank B. Walker, then executive Vice President of RCA Victor in charge of recording, told us that after the war Victor planned to issue two types of records—one the regular shellac and the other a plastic disc. The latter, he said, would be smoother and have quieter surfaces and would be issued at a higher price for connoisseurs.

Mr. J. W. Murray, present General Manager of the RCA Victor Record Division, tells us the new record was developed by Victor after eleven years of research work in the field. The disc is not only non-breakable but extremely flexible, and is composed almost entirely of vinyl resin plastic (synthetic) which produces a more durable, long-life record than the long popular shellac basis disc. The first release to be pressed on this new material will contain a performance of Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel*, performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. It will

be issued early in October. At present, Mr. Murray states, it is planned to release only newly recorded works on the new type discs, which will be known as Red Seal De Luxe records. The same work will be made available later on standard, Red Seal shellac records.

"While vinyl materials have been used for many years in the manufacture of expensive transcription records," said Mr. H. I. Reiskind, chief engineer of the RCA Victor Record Division, "particularly for radio broadcasts and for V discs used by our armed forces overseas, they have hitherto been prohibitively costly for use in home phonograph records. For a long time these records were not thought practical for home use, since—for one thing—they were not of sufficient thickness at the edges to be successfully handled by changers. The new disc we have developed can be successfully played on practically all types of home phonographs; including those equipped with automatic changers, and with varied types of needles. Surface sound reduction was made possible because the plastic compound does not require the mineral filler used in shellac records; this too has permitted us to develop a disc which can almost be seen through and its

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ruby red color held to the light will undoubtedly be as intriguing to some people as glassware of a similar color. Since the plastic materials are more costly, the new Red Seal De Luxe disc will sell at \$2.00."

In declaring that the new records would be available in limited quantities, Mr. Murray emphasized that Victor will not discontinue its production of the regular Red Seal and popular shellac discs. "The albums containing the new type records," he said, "might be likened to limited editions of fine books, since they offer the listener a still finer performance than is possible on the best shellac records. We anticipate that the use of this new material will eventually be expanded to other types of Victor discs. This will, of course, depend in some measure on the building up of facilities to produce the new type discs in sufficient quantities."

A single record containing parts 1 and 4 of the Boston Symphony performance of *Till Eulenspiegel* was presented to those of us who were at the demonstration in Mr. Murray's office on August 29. It was obvious in the demonstration that a record of considerable improvement in tone was being played, but it was not until we got the disc home that our own tests showed us the extent of the improvement. Employing several needles we found that the same results were obtained with all. The lack of surface sound, even with our high control wide open, was marked, but it was the extreme clarity of the reproduction that pleased us no end. The realism of the percussion will be noted by many, although machines that have false resonant qualities from an improperly built cabinet will hardly do justice to the bass and to those massive drum rolls that Strauss employs. All this in our own equipment was reproduced with admirable realism. It is too early to predict the wearing quality of this record, but the sponsors' claims that it is more durable and longer-lived than the shellac disc seem to us not exaggerated. Using a laboratory shadowgraphed needle of the best steel, with a fine point (a needle supposed to be employed only once), we found that both sides of the disc could be played with equal results with the same needle; the wear on the needle was negligible. Everyone knows that the mineral filler used in shellac discs causes the wear on ordinary records; the elimination of an aggressive substance should

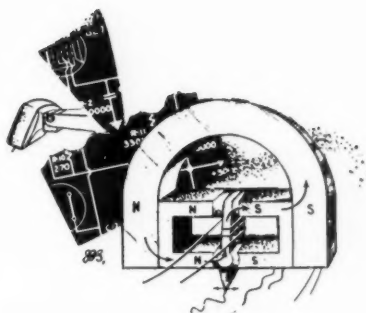
give any good needle a longer life when used on these plastic discs, but how much longer only future tests will show. There is no reason to believe that the quality of reproduction to be encountered in Victor's first plastic-disc set will not be present in subsequent releases. Mr. Murray contends that this plastic record is the greatest improvement in home phonograph records in 45 years. We do not feel inclined to dispute him at this time. Mr. Gordon Mercer, one of our advising engineers, has promised us an article for an early issue on "things to come"; he told us recently that the plastic disc is, in his opinion, an important improvement, and may turn out to be the most important one for a long time to come in the phonograph industry.

* * *

Considerable correspondence has reached our desk regarding the new knife-edge discs which Columbia has been releasing in recent months. A few readers with old changer mechanisms have encountered some trouble. Inquiries about these records brings us the information that they operate perfectly on the majority of changers in use, and that any trouble encountered with their operation in the older makes of changers can be overcome by a slight adjustment of the mechanism. One Philadelphia reader wrote us that he filed off the knife edge of the discs to accommodate his mechanism, but not everyone would be minded to do this. We suggest that if you have any difficulty with any changer handling any modern discs, consult a service man.

* * *

A word about the lateness of publication last month might be repeated at this time. The V-J celebrations held the magazine up for a whole week, and at least one advertiser had similar difficulties getting his material to us before the celebrations began. The magazine was shipped on the 27th of the month, but apparently from letters we have received some subscribers did not receive it until two weeks later. The shortage of manpower everywhere occasions delays; in time this will be corrected all along the line. We thank our readers for their patience and continued interest.



EXPERIMENTS WITH NEEDLE POINTS

By Matthew T. Jones

Here is the article by Dr. Matthew T. Jones, the well known Ohio physicist, which we mentioned as in preparation some months ago. The author has experimented with needle points more comprehensively than anyone we know, and we believe his findings will be of interest to a great many record buyers. His objective in his experiments is the reproduction of recorded material with the least possible distortion of sound. In our coming October issue, we will publish a summary of some specific findings that the author has sent us relating to particular pickups.—Ed.

The weakest link in the chain between an original performance and the reproduced sound from a speaker in the living room has been generally conceded to be the needle and pickup used to take the sound off the record. In particular, commercially pressed records present problems due to the variety of the dimensions and shape of the record groove and of the recording characteristics used. Considerable information and discussion has been published concerning the characteristics of pickups and needles for performing the function of reproducing the recorded sound. Some of this has been well covered from the standpoint of the average home listener in a recent article, *Needles, Reproduction and Scratch*, in the May 1945 issue of *The American Record Guide*. The present article covers mainly the experience encountered by the writer while experimenting with a variety of pickups and needles for playing records from a general collection of approximately 3000 commercial discs. This article does not at-

tempt to be comprehensive, but will serve to describe some solutions found for enjoying satisfactory reproduction of recorded music at home. For reasons discussed later, the best results have been obtained by the writer from replaceable sapphire needles in either a crystal or a magnetic pickup of the characteristics described.

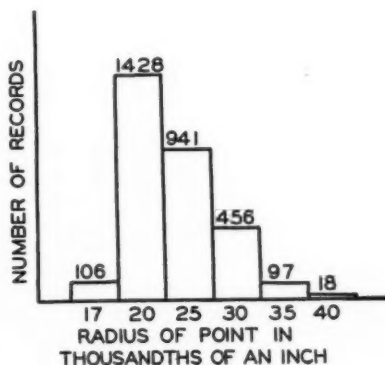
The sound equipment used with the pickups consisted of a good 35 watt amplifier and a Jensen PM speaker in an infinite baffle cabinet. The amplifier is equipped with separate bass and treble tone controls independently adjustable to either boost or lessen response in the regions controlled. Selection of pickups has resulted in retaining three which seem to be sufficiently free of the most prevalent pickup faults to give faithful and distortionless reproduction as judged by listening tests. These are: (1) an Astatic B-10 arm modified to accommodate an Astatic L-25 cartridge and counterbalanced to operate at approximately 1½ ounces needle pres-

sure, (2) an Audax PRO-2 unit and (3) an Astatic FP-18 unit. The first two possess the important advantage of employing interchangeable needles. The Audax reproduces the music with the best quality but requires care in installation and in handling. The modified Astatic B-10 arm provides an inexpensive pickup which operates well through the average commercial phonograph without any special alterations in circuits. The FP-18 unit is used by the writer for playing home-made recordings exclusively. For this use, the recordings can be made to suit the permanent jewel point with which this pickup is equipped and the almost negligible wear on needle and record contributes to make this pickup excellent for the purpose. The FP-18 is fine with commercial records *for which the needle shape is suited* but when this condition is not met, reproductive quality can be very bad. For this reason and because of the relatively short needle life of approximately 300 to 500 double-faced 12" records, the FP-18 unit is considered by the writer unsuitable for commercial records. Replacement of the needle requires the purchase of an entire new cartridge. These limitations have been found to apply to all pickups with permanent points tried, so that the writer feels it to be desirable to use units with replaceable needles as far as present commercial records are concerned.

Sapphire Point Preferred

The type of replaceable needle which has given the best reproduction is equipped with a sapphire point. However not all needles with sapphire points have been satisfactory; other design characteristics are of importance equal to the material used for the point. The entire needle should be as light as possible and should be designed so that it will not superimpose any unwanted variations in frequency response on that of the pickup. Also it seems desirable that the needle should not be too short; the longer needle does not drive the pickup armature to as great amplitudes as the shorter needle. This is important because many pickups introduce distortion proportional to the amplitude of oscillation of the armature and also because tracking difficulties multiply with increased amplitude. Of course the amplifier should have sufficient gain available to make up the loss of volume associated with the longer needle.

One needle that fits these specifications is the Duotone Star Sapphire. However, even with this needle, there are many records which reproduced poorly, apparently a result of misfit between needle and record groove. In order to make a test of this theory, a series of Star Sapphire needles with various point radii were made available through the courtesy of the Duotone Company. By use of this series of test needles it has been found possible to play more than 99% of the records in the writer's collection with little or no audible distortion and with a minimum of scratch even with the treble tone control set so as not to filter out the highs. Also when the needle fitted the groove for best reproduction, both needle and record wear were reduced to a minimum. The reason for this latter result seems to be related with the fact that the end of the needle and the bottom of the record groove matched their contours so well that the pressure was distributed over a larger area with consequent reduction in unit pressure at the points of contact. The distribution of point radii to achieve the results just described is shown in the block diagram. Almost half the records required the .0020"



point radius with most of the remainder requiring either the .0025" or the .0030" radius.

The symptoms by which misfit between needle and record groove was recognized are summarized as follows. When the needle was too small for the groove, scratch noise became excessive and a scrubbing noise appeared that makes woodwinds sound as if they were being "flutter tongued." This

seemed to be a consequence of rattle in the groove. Also with this condition, the highs were removed from the reproduced sound, which can be explained by the fact that the needle can ride by the minute deviations in the groove by which the highs are recorded, without recognizing their presence. When the needle was too large for the groove, there was no distortion of low frequencies, but distortion in the highs became excessively audible. The degree of distortion varied considerably; the distortion increased as the volume on the record became higher, as the center of the record was approached and as the degree of misfit increased. However the scratch level did not increase so that if the amplifying system filtered the highs, the records could be listened to satisfactorily as long as high fidelity was not the prime consideration. This, coupled with the fact that needles with larger point radii give less scratch and do not wear as rapidly as smaller ones, probably explains the reasons for the popularity of large needle radii with the phonograph manufacturers.

Two Points Recommended

As a practical solution for retaining most of the advantages derived from the use of the above series of needle sizes and yet not requiring as much needle changing, the number of needles required might be reduced to two, one with a .0022" radius and the other with a .0030" radius. This would allow good high fidelity reproduction for all but about 7% of the records. A word of caution might be inserted here which has been pointed out by others. In removing and replacing sapphire needles, great care must be exercised to replace the needle with the exact orientation of the point with respect to the pickup at which it was located before removal. Also, once a needle is used in a given pickup, it should be used in no other. Otherwise the needle can cause serious damage to the record by presenting a cutting edge to the side walls of the groove.

The size of needle required for most commercial records can be related to their origin and condition. Most domestic recordings made more than six or seven years ago and most foreign made recordings regardless of age required the .0020" needle radius. Some recent Victor and most recent Columbia records made domestically have required the

.0030" needle radius. A good many records made in between these two periods and many recent Victor records required the .0025" needle radius. Most of the records made by small American companies requires needles of larger radii, .0025" to .0035" with some exceptions, like Technichord, for which the .0020" radius was suited. The above conclusions apply only to records which are in new condition and which have been pressed from stampers in good condition. In general, worn records and records which have been pressed from worn dies require the needle size to be increased to eliminate scratch and distortion. Records which have been badly worn may be made to sound almost as well as when they were new by the use of a needle radius large enough so that the needle does not penetrate the groove to the worn area. When the records are pressed from worn dies, it is usually the bottom of the groove that becomes rough and filled in. A large needle radius, which does not permit the needle to penetrate the groove this far, then can make the record sound well. While the large needles make a satisfactory compromise in those cases, it is true that loss of highs is audible when compared with the same records in new condition and pressed from new stampers. Records that have been pressed from worn stampers can be recognized frequently by variation in the needle size required; in a given set thus pressed it is not uncommon to find needle radii ranging from .0025" to .0040" required for the various records. Most of the domestically pressed Decca records are in this class, but in the past five years all companies have been guilty of putting out similar products. This was noticeable both in new recordings and in re-pressings of old ones. This has probably been occasioned by war shortages (shellac, among others) and by the desire to make as many records as possible at the lowest cost. If the recording engineers could be persuaded to bring the quality of pressings back from the low level that has recently prevailed to the high level that existed before 1940, the needle radii above .0030" would no longer be required. Victor pressings made in about 1935 are examples of how good recorded music can be made to sound when the quality of pressing is high. Apparently many foreign companies never overuse stampers, which would account for the quality of these records which has

been commented upon by many people. It would not be out of the question for the record companies to standardize, as has been done in other industries, certain things like the shape of the record groove and to specify the needle shape that will best fit this groove. There should at least be consistency among all the records put out by any given company.

Some Recordings

Some specific examples in the writer's collection which reproduce unusually well owing to a good fit between needle and groove are described. The .0017" needle radius was indispensable, as well as productive of best results, for the Mozart *Concertante Sinfonie*, for violin and viola (Columbia 188), the Bruckner *Fourth Symphony* (Victor 331), the Schumann *First Symphony* (Victor 655) and Brahms *Third Symphony* of Clemens Krauss (H.M.V. 118). All the Beecham London Philharmonic Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic—both Columbia and Victor—older Boston "Pops" and Philadelphia Orchestra and many others of foreign origin fitted the .0020" radius unless, of course, they were recently pressed from worn stampers. The Beecham records particularly are examples of how good an orchestra can sound on records. It is revealing how well many old electric recordings sound when played with the .002" radius needle in an Audax Pro-2 pickup; many foreign records seem ideally suited to this combination. Two of the best examples of domestic recordings which reproduce with unusually good fidelity are the Cleveland Orchestra *Scheherazade* (Columbia 398) and the Stravinsky *Rites of Springs* (Columbia 417) when played with the .0025" radius needle. Examples where the records seem to be made deliberately to fit the .0030" radius are the Berlioz *Fantastic Symphony* (Columbia 488) and *Harold In Italy* (Victor 989), and the Shostakovich *First Symphony* (Columbia 472) and *Fifth Symphony* (Columbia 520).

The discussion of needles would be incomplete without a consideration of other types commonly in use. The writer's experience with steel and chromium needles has been that they cause considerable record wear and do not give the crystal clear reproduction possible with the sapphire needles. It would be hard to conceive conditions where a steel needle being ground to fit the groove as the

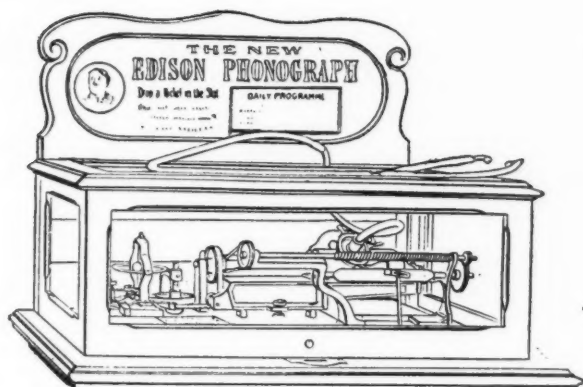
record is played would not cause considerable wear on the groove as well. The record would have to be extremely hard to avoid wear on itself. Also the grinding action produces fine steel filings which are left behind in the groove and certainly should be more damaging than a similar soft dust left behind from thorn needles. However, pickups that require a heavy needle pressure to track properly are forced to use steel or chromium needles as a best compromise between wear and fidelity. Such needles should be picked for size and shape to fit the groove at the start of a record for best results.

How To Keep Thornes

Thorn needles have been made to give satisfactory results with a minimum of wear on records. They should be sharpened with a small included angle at the point with light pressure so that a sharp point can be attained to prevent shouldering. Also it has been found necessary that the needles be kept very dry. This has been accomplished by the use of a chemist's dessicator filled with dry calcium chloride to store the needles until the moment of use. Even this is inadequate in humid weather because the point can pick up enough moisture to cause fuzzy reproduction before even one record side is completed. Also it was found necessary to sharpen the needle at least after every two record sides under the best of conditions. Even with these precautions, many thorn needles on the market proved unsatisfactory. Some brands found to work well are Duotone Cactus, Kacti, Emerald B.C.N., Musicraft Thorn, and Greythorne. The last-named needle disturbs frequency response somewhat. Thorn needles produce varying degrees of high frequency loss but some of this can be regained by adjustment of the treble tone control to boost the highs.

Another type of permanent needle employs a precious metal alloy point in place of sapphire. The same considerations apply to these as to the sapphire needles. The main difference observed has been in the useful life of the needles as determined by audible high frequency distortion creeping in as a result of needle wear. The best life for the alloy points was found to range from 50 to 100 double-faced 12" records while the life for the series of sapphire needles ranged from

(Continued on page 28)



An Edison Nickel-in-Slot Machine—1897

VOICE OF THE WIZARD

By Ulysses Walsh

Forty years or so ago, when the now defunct cylinder phonograph was still more popular than the disc, record buyers had their hearts set on several things.

They wanted the phonograph companies to record songs written by themselves and have them rendered by their favorite artists; they wanted the words of songs given on a slip enclosed with the records*; they yearned for a record with a longer playing time than the two-minute cylinders then in use, and—most of all—they burned to possess a record bearing the voice of that greatest of great men, Thomas Alva Edison himself.

All these dreams except the first came true in time. The gentleman who composed all by himself a pathetic ballad which he called "Mamma No. 2" and sent to the National Phonograph Co., makers of Edison records, with the demand that his favorite tenor,

Byron G. Harlan, sing it forthwith so that it could appear in "next month's list" never got his wish. But, after asserting for years that it would be impossible to produce a longer playing record without marketing an entirely new type of machine, Edison in November 1908 began making four-minute "Amberol" cylinders. For a brief time after the unbreakable Blue Amberol cylinders were introduced in 1912, printed slips giving the words were supplied with records, and discs and cylinders containing the voice of the erstwhile "Wizard of Menlo Park" were catalogued in 1919, when he was 72.

For some years, however, it appeared that the average owner's ambition to add to his collection a cylinder spoken by the inventor would go unfulfilled. Mr. Edison of course had become the first recording artist in the world when he shouted "Mary Had a Little Lamb" into the original phonograph, made for him at a cost of \$18 by a mechanic, John Kruesi. That was in 1877, about 30 years before the public clamor for him to record his voice reached its height. Throughout

*Record buyers still would like the words included with vocal records. No one seems to have considered this wish except Polydor in Germany.

the years that followed he stoutly declined to "commercialize" himself by making a record for public sale.

And here the reader is likely to pause and inquire: "Well, why on earth were people so anxious to hear a few words spoken by the Old Man?" The answer seems to be that the men and women of that bygone generation had a completely wrong impression of Mr. Edison's personality and inventive methods. Instead of visualizing him as the patient, plodding experimenter and investigator that he actually was, they depicted him as waving a sort of magic wand and pulling down miracles from heaven. Sound recording, bringing into remote small towns and farm homes the music of entertainers thousands of miles away, seemed such an amazing achievement that the lonely listeners worshipped Thomas A. Edison as a super-man and felt that hearing him speak a few words on a wax cylinder would be the next best thing to shaking his democratic hand and thanking him for the blessing his phonograph had been.

Edison's Record Journal

The Phonogram, a small "fan magazine" distributed by Edison dealers in those days to record buyers, frequently published letters illustrating the sort of spiritual kinship which the average Edison user felt for the man who had made the phonograph possible.

"Night after night," said one grateful user, "laughter rings out in the parlor. Our home has been transformed. I enjoy home as I never did before. I feel that I want to shake hands with Thomas A. Edison and tell him personally just what his phonograph has done for me."

From remote lands came tributes. In the *Phonogram* for June 1908 Miss Ellie Wemyss, of Parkside, South Australia, expressed her gratitude for the fact that the phonograph had made it possible for her brother to send home a record of his voice to brighten the lives of her parents and herself. Writing to Mr. Edison, she said:

"Perhaps you who have given us this wonder, who have wrought this miracle, will be able to imagine the effect and impression of it upon us. When I first heard this phonograph of ours . . . a great wave of reverence and wonder and grateful joy came over me . . . And when I heard this record, that

feeling was intensified and made personal and individual."

The thankful girl accompanied her letter with a poem of 15 stanzas, of which the final three were:

"By labour true your 'talents ten'
Increase a hundredfold!
Your strenuous life of work for men
Can ne'er be paid in gold.

And so we send our thanks to you
From our far Continent;
With grateful love, a tribute due,
Such men are well content.

God cherish that great life of thine!
God guard and bless it still,
That you may give more gifts divine,
And all his work fulfill!"

With people feeling that way about Thomas A. Edison, no wonder they wanted to hear a record of his voice.

Typical of letters to the *Phonogram* on this all-absorbing subject was one from E. H. C. (full names of persons writing to the "Questions and Answers" department were not given), of Owatonna, Minn., who, in the October 1905 issue asked:

"Can Mr. Edison be persuaded to make a record in his own voice with the title, 'How I Invented the Phonograph,' and accompanied by a few telegraphic 'dots and dashes'? I have," E. H. C. added, "a Standard, and when giving entertainments frequently hear expressed the wish to 'hear Mr. Edison's own voice.' Should Mr. Edison do this and the music and science-loving public find it out through the *Phonogram*, I am sure the demand would be great."

The editor replied: "We realize the popularity that a record would have if made by Mr. Edison personally, but we know that Mr. Edison will not consent to making such a record."

Two months earlier, W. G., of Barrow Bar, Canada, had written:

"Why do you not get Mr. Edison himself to make the announcements on a few records? I am sure they would be good sellers." Replied the editor: "We realize the selling possibilities of records made or announced by Mr. Edison, but he would not consider such a suggestion."

Some customers apparently pleased themselves with the belief that when they listened

to the spoken announcements at the beginning of cylinders they heard the Voice of the Wizard. In January 1908, J. F., of Winterset, Ohio, hopefully inquired:

"Is it Thomas A. Edison who makes the announcements on the records?" To which the *Phonogram* indignantly replied: "Certainly not. They are made by a member of our recording department." A few months later the editor broke down and ceased to make a mystery of the "member's" identity by revealing that the announcer was one of Edison's popular comedians, Edward Meeker.

Edison's Voice Requested

Under the heading of "Things We Cannot Do," there was an amusing article in the November 1907 issue dealing with the topics about which record buyers wrote most insistently.

"One oft-repeated request," said the anonymous editor, "is for a 'Message From Edison.' A man from Kansas City says briefly and compellingly, 'It's up to Thomas A. Edison to make a record.' A Vermont lady who is good enough to relate her family history in full and the many and severe illnesses from which she has recovered says, in conclusion, 'After this letter I expect Mr. Edison to make a record.'"

"There are many similar letters and although we appreciate the interest evinced in the phonograph's inventor, we must say that there is no likelihood of such a thing happening. No living American has been made the subject of so many newspaper and magazine stories as Mr. Edison, but he prefers to remain in his laboratory and keep out of the limelight. He shrinks from the idea of making a record to be distributed broadcast. He is not a professional record maker, but an inventor, and if our friends only think for a moment, every phonograph is a 'message from Edison.'"

The remainder of the article does not bear directly upon the "record by Mr. Edison" theme, but it is worth quoting for the sake of its humorous quality:

"Another thing frequently demanded is that we make records of verses submitted, on the grounds that they would 'sell well.' A contributor from the Middle West wants us to make a record of a song that was sung a great deal in her young days. She does not call to mind its title or author, but thinks the

first verse opened in this spirited manner, 'O little bird, I would I were thy mate!' and there is a line whistled by the little birdie in every one of the verses. The tune has escaped her but she says we could easily find out what it was or else 'compose fresh music.' Another writer says that his life has been a thrilling one and a record of it would be instructive to all. He enclosed a few details of his younger days, commencing thus:

"The schools that were when I was young

Did oft my heart annoy;

And so I made a strong resolve

To be a sailor boy.

Yo! Ho! for the briny deep."

"The few details took seven minutes to read aloud and as they fore-shadowed a life of extreme complexity there is no telling how many hundred records it would take to do his career justice.

"We do not," the editor said, "keep poets or composers for the purpose of setting words to music or writing verses to stray airs. Our readers will understand that it is through no discourtesy to them that we put the matter thus forcibly but rather that by using the newest and most popular airs we hope both to please them and keep ahead of our competitors."

The subject of a record by Mr. Edison did not die down altogether, despite repeated disappointments. In November 1909, T. McD., of Springston, Idaho, asked: "Has Mr. Edison ever made any records? If not, do you think he ever will?" The wearily given answer was: "Mr. Edison has never made a record for commercial purposes. He, of course, made several during the experimental stage of the phonograph, but none later."

It took a World War to induce Mr. Edison to break his silence, and by that time probably most of the original yearners for his voice had quit buying records or lost interest. In 1919, however, shortly after the war ended, the Edison Company announced that Mr. Edison had a message of such transcendent importance for the American public that he had consented to break his lifelong rule of not speaking for recording purposes. The talk, which appeared on Diamond Discs and Blue Amberol cylinders under the title of "Let Us Not Forget—A Message to the

(Continued on page 28)



Rossini as the
"Noisy Modernist"

SOME ROSSINI ANECDOTES

By Sydney Grew

Rossini once revenged himself on a theater manager in an odd way. He was twenty-one at the time (1813), and under contract to write for the San Mosè Theatre in Venice. The manager of another Venetian theater, the Fenice, engaged him to write an opera for that theater as well, and the manager of the San Mosè was very angry to hear that the young composer had accepted a commission from a competitor. So he gave Rossini a particularly absurd libretto: in those days a composer, contracted to a theater, had to supply the music for any libretto that the management cared to accept and pass on to him; and the manager of the San Mosè calculated that the inevitable failure of this silly thing would injure the young composer.

But Rossini knew what to do. The actors of the theater were all cast for their parts, and, as usual, he was expected to write in a way to show their gifts and abilities to the best advantage. Instead, he did everything to thwart them and make them look absurd. One of the actors could not sing at all, but

only patter and rattle; and Rossini set the text of the solo piece which he had to do to a very difficult melody, accompanying this moreover on the violins, pianissimo and pizzicato, so that nothing in the orchestra should draw attention from the singer or afford him the slightest help. Another actor, whose appearance was laughable and who was generally retained for small, insignificant parts, was provided with a splendid sentimental piece. For the heavy bass Rossini wrote melodies that remained all the time in the higher register, and for the brilliant soprano melodies that never left the lower register. He played a joke even on the orchestra, for in one of the pieces he directed that the players of the string instruments should tap their tin candle-shades with their bows at the beginning of every bar.

The opera as usual was not ready until just before the advertised performance, and it had to be produced; but the audience took the joke in bad part, and Rossini had to slip away to avoid being mobbed.

When the *Barber of Seville* was first produced (1816), it was hissed all through the theater. Rossini, who was conducting, turned round and heartily applauded. This upset the audience. They did not know whether the composer was hurling defiance at them or applauding them for their wisdom in seeing the poverty of the work he had just presented.

Rossini and George IV.

Rossini came to London in 1824, and met King George IV at Brighton. The king took him to the concert-room and said: "I have picked the first piece of music for the program. You won't like it, I expect; but you shall pick all the rest." Rossini did like it, however, for it was one of his own overtures, and he appreciated the compliment. Then he did a very tactful thing. He went to the leader of the band to praise him for the playing of his overture, and asked him quickly to name the king's favorite pieces. And so when, sitting with the king, he asked for this, that, or the other musical composition, King George was delighted to find how his taste agreed with that of the famous composer.

While in London, on this visit to England, Rossini and his wife used to appear at aristocratic musical entertainments. He found that the two of them could command a fee of fifty pounds, which was more than an opera composer could get in Italy for an opera: she sang, and he accompanied, and the engagements numbered nearly sixty,—
"And that was worth having, after all," Rossini said. "The people liked to see the tip of my nose."

But what amused him was the fact that other famous musicians were engaged to share in the accompanying. Dragonetti, the double-bass, and Puzzi, the horn, turned up at the first soirée and seated themselves by the piano. "What are you going to do?" Rossini asked. "Help you with the accompanying," they answered. "Have you your parts then for these pieces?" Rossini inquired, "and do you know these works?" "Oh no," they replied, "but we are engaged to be here, and we can put in bits where we see fit." Rossini laughed, and told Dragonetti to confine himself to a plucked note once in a while, and Puzzi to come in at the cadences with a sustained note; which they

did, and everything went off without mishap.

Rossini would speak very pleasantly to other people about their music, when it pleased him. Moscheles once extemporized to him on the piano, and he said: "Is that printed? It is music that flows from the fountain head! There are two kinds of water,—spring water and reservoir. The latter runs when you turn the cock, and at no other time, and it always tastes of the vase. The other gushes forth constantly, and is ever limpid and fresh. So your music, my dear master of the piano!"

But with other music, there were other attitudes. He once said to someone, "That dear Costa has sent me a score of his oratorio and a Stilton cheese. The cheese is very good." Another version of the same story has it Costa sent him the score and the Stilton cheese and Rossini avoided Costa for weeks. One day he ran into Costa and the latter asked Rossini how he liked the score, to which Rossini replied: "My dear Costa, I meant to thank you for the Stilton cheese, it was very good."

"All Operas Are Alike"

When an acquaintance complained that he had transferred a piece from one opera of his to another, Rossini said, "What does it matter? All my operas are alike. If you have heard one, you have heard all."

Rossini was a sublime gourmet. Historians and critics have been puzzled for over three score years to explain why, after writing nearly forty operas, he suddenly gave up work at the age of thirty-seven, to do little more in music except practice the piano for the remaining forty years of his life. But—apart from the fact that he was now well-to-do—perhaps the reason was his eating. He was not gluttonous. No stories are told of him like that told of Handel, who ordered a dinner for a party, and when asked by the inn-keeper when the party would arrive, seated himself at the table and said, "I am de barty. Pring in de dinner." Rossini ate well, but as an artist; even though as a joke he once remarked, "The turkey is a disappointing bird, too big for one, yet not big enough for two." He used to prepare food for himself, and was particularly proud of his skill in salad dressing. "I should have been a good cook," he once said, "if my early education had not been neglected."

Once Rossini found out a fine poetic idea concerning food. "The stomach is the conductor who rules the orchestra of human passions. An empty stomach is like a bassoon that growls with discontent or a piccolo that asserts its desires in shrill tones. A full stomach, on the other hand, is the drum of joy and the triangle of pleasure. The four acts of the comic opera of life are to eat, to love, to sing, to digest. The man is an ass who lets life pass without enjoying them to the full."

But Rossini grew world-weary at the end, and in his last years he occupied himself with breeding pigs. Which reminds one of another of his witty remarks. Patti sang him one of his airs with some decorations that he himself had not provided. "Who taught you that?" he asked; and the singer said: "Strakosch." "Well," retorted Rossini, "that is Strakosch-onnerie." (The joke, unfortunately, must be interpreted. Cochon is French for pig. Cochonnerie is French for filthiness, or for any nasty thing. The expression that Rossini used becomes "stra-cochonnerie". It is not recorded what Patti replied.

Stories clustered around Rossini, to be repeated from one end of Europe to the other. His reference to people seeing the tip of his nose is characteristic of his refusal to take people or his position seriously. Here is another instance. An opera by Louisa Bertin, a very popular and admired amateur, was in final rehearsal in Paris. The stalls were filled with famous members of Parisian society, and Rossini was provided with a seat on the stage by the wings, where he was looked at more than the actors were. Half-way through the second act, during a pause for some detail of the work to be adjusted, he moved, rose, and walked towards the conductor. Everybody hushed everybody else, and the murmur ran around the place, "Rossini is going to say something!" And say something he did. It was: "Monsieur Habeneck, you don't see it then? One of the lamps is smoking." And then he went back to his seat.

Berlioz was amused at the following story, exclaiming at the close, "What a devastating wit!" It was at a Paris rehearsal of *William Tell*, and Rossini was seated on the stage. During a break, he walked across towards the oboe player, Henri Brod, and said: "Have you a snuff-box? Thanks! Pray give me a

pinch. Oh, M. Brod, in the introduction of the so-and-so there is an F which you play a semitone sharp. I would prefer it natural, if you do not mind. And as to your F sharp, do not be concerned about it,—we will find some means of using it somewhere or other."

Berlioz, it might be noted, was not a great admirer of Rossini. In his *Mémoires*, he protested against the rage for Rossini in Paris during the 1820's by stating he agreed with the painter Ingres who spoke of Rossini's music as "the work of an under-bred man". Berlioz says that "Rossini, speaking of Weber's music, says that it gives him the colic." "But the aversion of Handel and Rossini," continues Berlioz, "is, I think, due to a different cause; it is impossible for two men of stomach to understand two men of heart." If Rossini answered this one, I have not seen it in print.

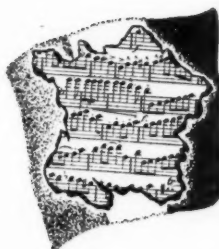
Rossini's laziness became proverbial, and it was not altogether a pose, for though he wrote his nearly forty operas in less than twenty years, he always left things to the last moment and so had to rush them.

Charles Hallé, the pianist, talking with Donizetti, said: "Is it possible Rossini was a fortnight writing his *Barber of Seville*?" And Donizetti answered, "I can quite believe he was, for he has always been a confoundedly lazy fellow."

There are several stories, by the by, about Rossini applauding at the *Barber of Seville* fiasco of the first performance.* The one generally told is that given above. The one I prefer is this. The opera was progressing in deadly silence, when the theater cat wandered on the stage and had to be chased off by a couple of the actors. This enlivened the scene, and Rossini, rising from the piano at which he was directing the performance, applauded the cat.

*Rossini's *Barber of Seville* was not immediately successful because of the popularity of the Paisiello opera on the same subject. Berlioz, who in later years praised highly Rossini's score, tells us that "the dilettanti of Rome, on the appearance of Rossini's *Barber of Seville* (which is Italian enough in all conscience), were ready to kill the young maestro for having the insolence to do anything unlike Paisiello."





ADDITIONAL FRENCH RELEASES

The scarcity of paper in France has made it impossible for us to acquire French supplements beyond 1943. It would seem that very few of these were printed. A French reader of long standing, however, has copied down the releases of 1944 and forwarded them to us. The series of records issued by Les Dis-cophiles Francaises, given at the end of our French record survey in the January 1945 issue were all 1944 releases; at the time of assembling this earlier material we were not cognizant of this fact.

The domestic companies, we are given to understand, will issue many important foreign releases at some time in the future. Many of the items listed in this magazine at different times cannot be imported now, such information is provided for interest of readers only, but the day is not too far distant when the anxious record buyer will be able to add foreign records that he desires to his collection. In the meantime, we are pursuing our policy of keeping readers informed of worthwhile record activities in the leading countries of Europe. Interest in these lists is undeniably great, judging from the avalanche of correspondence we have received.

It is to be hoped that the domestic companies will be able to procure some of the fine recordings made in France during the years since this source was cut off. Columbia has two important sets—Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust* and *Requiem Mass*—which deserve

to be considered at as early a date as it is feasible to acquire the matrices of these sets. The *Requiem Mass*, a powerfully dramatic work, which has been performed all too seldom will be most welcome in a recording. Its issuance will provoke endless dispute among reviewers; the sort of thing that in the end probably achieves more record sales than any other type of writing. People like to take sides, and Berlioz is the kind of composer who provokes differences of opinion. "People (even critics) go to him to be shocked," said Philip Barr in an article in the March 1939 *AML*, "and when they are not shocked, they want their money back."

One of the domestic companies should arrange an affiliation with Pathé; Columbia had one in the past, but whether this exists today or not we do not know. Pathé has some decidedly worthwhile material; more recordings, for example, by that charming singer Ninon Vallin, who was once called by an American the "Parisian Geraldine Farrar," and others by the admirable French pianist Carmen Guilbert.

Recordings 1944—French H.M.V.

BACH: *Concerto in D minor*, for clavecin and orchestra; Marguerite Roesgen-Champion (piano), with Orchestra dir. E. Bigot. (Discs W1581/83).

BEYDTS: *Lyrs et amour—Le bracelet; L'echo; La belle esclave more; Le baiser de Dorinde;*

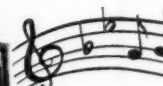
KIPNIS

Boris Godounoff: an RCA Victor Recordrama with text and pictures supplementing the recorded highlights. The original Russian version, starring Alexander Kipnis. RCA Victor Album M/DM-1000, \$5.75.



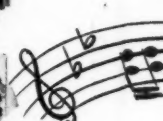
KREISLER

My Favorites: six beloved Kreisler melodies, including *Liebesfreud*, *Caprice Viennois*, *La Gitana*. Featuring Fritz Kreisler. RCA Victor Album M-910, \$3.50.



MacDONALD

Italian Street Song: sung by Jeanette MacDonald in Naughty Marietta on RCA Victor Record 10-1134, \$75. Look for the attractive display at your RCA Victor dealer's.



PEERCE

Golden Moments of Song: Jan Pearce sings four lovely old Italian melodies, including *O Sole Mio* and *Return to Sorrento*. Look for the colorfully illustrated Showpiece, containing interesting stories about the music. SP-8, \$1.75.



OTHER OUTSTANDING RED SEAL RELEASES FOR SEPTEMBER

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Serge Koussevitzky, Conductor: *Symphony No. 3, in F—Brahms*. Album M/DM-1007, \$4.50.

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Désiré Defauw, Conductor: *Céphale et Procris—Gretry*. Record 11-8825, \$1.00.

CINCINNATI SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Eugene Goossens, Conductor: *Der Rosenkavalier, Suite—Richard Strauss*. Album M/DM-997, \$3.50.

WILLIAM KAPEL, Pianist: *Prelude in C-Sharp Minor—Rachmaninoff; Three Preludes From Opus 34—Shostakovich*. Record 11-8824, \$1.00.

EDMUND KURTZ, 'Cellist: *Sonatine—Beethoven*;

Chant Du Ménestrel (Song of the Minstrel)—Glazounoff. Record 11-8815, \$1.00.

JAMES MELTON, Tenor: *Holiday for Strings—Gallopp-Rose; Our Waltz—Burton-Rose*. Record 10-1172, \$75.

YEHUDI MENUHIN, Violinist: *HEPHZIBAH MENUHIN*, Pianist: *Sonata No. 2, in C Minor—Beethoven. Rondo in G—Beethoven*. Album M/DM-1008, \$4.50.

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, Vladimir Golschmann, Conductor: *Transfigured Night* (Verklärte Nacht—Music for the ballet, "Pillar of Fire")—Schönberg. *Adagio—Corelli*. Album M/DM-1005, \$4.50.

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- Pierre Bernac (tenor), with Orch., dir. Beydts. (Disc W1587).
- BIZET: *Patrie—Overture* (3 sides), and LA-PARRA: *La Habanera—Prelude Act 3* (1 side); Paris Conservatory Orch., dir. A. Clutens.
- DAYAYRAC: *Quartet No. 3—Allegro, Sicilienne*; Orchestre féminin, dir. Jeanne Evard. (Disc W1595).
- GERVAISE: *Danses de la Renaissance*; Quartet of viols, dir. Mme. Hélène Teyssière-Wuilemier. (Disc W1594).
- HAYDN: *Concerto in C major*, violin and orch.; Mlle. Michelle Auclair with Conservatory Orch., dir. Jacques Thibaud. (Discs W1579-80).
- HONEGGER: *Symphony for Strings*; Conservatory Orch., dir. Charles Munch. (Discs W1600/02).
- MOZART: *Serenade No. 10 in E flat major*, K. 361; Orch. de la Société des Instruments à vent, dir. F. Oubradous. (Discs W1575/77).
- RAVEL: *Schéhérazade—Trois chansons*; Janine Micheau (soprano) with Lamoureux Orch., dir. E. Bigot. (Discs W1584/85).
- ROUSSEL: *Sinfonietta*; Orchestre féminin, dir. Jeanne Evard. (Disc W1596).
- STRAUSS, R.: *Don Juan*; Orch. of the Chapel of Queen Elizabeth of Belgium, dir. Haudret. (Discs W1555/56).
- THOMAS: *Hamlet—Air de la folie*; Janine Micheau (soprano), Lamoureux Orch., dir. E. Bigot. (Disc W1592).
- DEBUSSY: *Images—Reflets dans l'eau; Mouvement*. (Disc W1593). *Homage a Rameau*. (Disc DA496). Jean Doyen (piano).
- FRANCK: *Prelude, Aria and Finale*; Lucienne Delforge (piano). (Discs W1606/08).

Columbia

- BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 5 (Emperor)*; Marguerite Long (piano), with Conservatory Orch., dir. Charles Munch. (Discs LFX 679/83).
- BERLIOZ: *La Damnation de Faust*; Mona Laurena (Marguerite), Georges Jouatte (Faust), Paul Cabanel (Méphisto), M. Iactat (Brander), Emile Passani Chorus, Orchestre de Radio-Paris, direction Jean Fournier. (Discs LFX 614/28).
- BERLIOZ: *Requiem (Grande Messe des Mortes)*; Orchestra and Chorus of Emile

Passani, directed by Jean Fournier—soloist, Georges Jouatte (tenor). (Discs LFX 659/69).

COUPERIN: *Tic-toc-choc-ou les maillottins* and SCARLATTI: *Sonata in D minor*; Marcelle Charbonnier (harpsichord). (Disc LF 183).

DOHNANYI: *Ruralia Hungarica, Op. 32*; Pierre Nérini (violin), and Janine Nerini (piano). Discs LF 184/85).

FAURE: *Nocturne No. 7*; Jacques Février (piano). Disc LFX 652).

FAURE: *Au cimetière, and Au bord de l'eau* (Disc LF 190). *Automne, and Clair de lune* (Disc LF 191). *Nell, and Roses d'Ispahan* (Disc LF 192). G. Guillaumat (soprano) and Pierre Sancier (piano).

HALFFTER: *Rapsodie Portugaise*; Marguerite Long (piano) with Conservatory Orch., dir. Charles Munch (Discs LFX 629/30).

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 49 in F minor (La Passione)*; Chamber Orch. of Paris, dir. Pierre Duvanchelle. (Discs LFX 676/77).

HUBEAU: *Sonata for chromatic trumpet and piano*; R. Sabarich and Jean Hubeau. (Disc LFX 678).

MOZART: *Dans un bois solitaire* (ariette); and *Nozze di Figaro—Suzanna's aria*; Mona; Péchenart (soprano) and Marie-Jeanne Etcheparre (piano). (Disc LF189).

STRAUSS, R.: *Ariane a Naxos—Air de Zerbinette* Odette Turba-Rabier (soprano) with orch., dir. Jean Fournier. (Disc LFX 675).

Pathé'

DEBUSSY: *Promenoir des deux amants, Nos. 1, 2, 3, and Mandoline*; Ninon Vallin (soprano) with orch., dir. L. Beydts. (Disc PDT 82).

FAURE: *Le secret, and Soir*; Ninon Vallin (soprano). Disc PD 45).

MOUSSORGSKY (arr. Ravel): *Pictures et an Exhibition*; Conservatory Orch., dir. Jean Giardino. (Discs PDT 84/87).

MOZART: *Nozze di Figaro—Countess' Aria*; Ninon Vallin (soprano) with Orch., dir. L. Beydts. (Disc PD 35).

SCHUBERT: *Symphony in C minor (Tragic)*; Orchestra, dir. Marius-François Gaillard (Discs PDT 88/91).

STRAUSS, R.: *Till Eulenspiegel*; Conservatory Orch., dir. Jean Giardino. (Discs PDT 69/70).



ENRICO CARUSO—HIS LIFE AND DEATH

A Book Review

ENRICO CARUSO—HIS LIFE AND DEATH. By Dorothy Caruso. Simon and Shuster, New York, 1945. 303 pp. Price \$2.75.

▲ In this book, Dorothy Caruso not only relates the story of her three years as the wife of the world's greatest tenor, but also manages to weave into her narrative much of her famous husband's early background and history. She brings us the intimate and often fantastic details of Caruso's private life, and fortunately she gives her biography additional authority by including dozens of the letters she received from Caruso while he was away on tour. Written in an expressively individual brand of Italianate English, they are a delight to read and I am inclined to agree with the many magazine and newspaper critics who seem to feel they are the best part of the book. There is a fine group of photographs of the tenor showing how he looked both off stage and on during various periods of his career, and the text is illustrated with some of Caruso's celebrated caricatures. Finally, there is a complete discography.

Dorothy Caruso is by no means a distin-

guished writer—perhaps that would be too much to expect—but the intrinsic value of her story will, for many, outweigh the obvious defects of this biography. For instance, her account of Caruso's illness and unnecessary death is truly moving. A curious feature of the book, however, is the author's failure to mention her first attempt to tell this story—*Wings of Song—The Story of Caruso*. Written in collaboration with Torrance Goddard, it first appeared serially in *The Saturday Evening Post* and was then published in 1928 by Minton, Balch & Company of New York. Oddly enough, there are a number of discrepancies between the two versions and, while the contradictory statements are of no great importance in themselves, one wishes that in this present publication the author had offered some explanation of them. While on the subject of other Caruso biographies, the best of them all should be mentioned—*Enrico Caruso*, by Pierre Key and Bruno Zirato.

By the inclusion of Jack L. Caidin's discography, with dates of recording and both single and double-faced numbers, Simon and Shuster have set a precedent which all future

(Continued on page 28)



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RECORD NOTES AND

REVIEWS

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the reader is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.

All prices given are without tax.

Orchestra

BARBER: *Symphony No. 1, Opus 9* (In one movement); played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of Bruno Walter. Columbia set X or MX-252, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ Samuel Barber is sometimes criticized for being conservative, but conservatism is as admirable in its way as progressiveness. Not all men are pioneers, and all artistic expression finds its motivation in what has gone before. I would be inclined to say that Barber tends to brood and meditate in a more poised manner than most of our modern composers. Even the scherzo section of the

present work is not charged with the nervous rhythmic tension that seems so rife today. The musical ideas of this symphony are intelligibly defined and convincingly worked out. Moreover, the work has individuality and shows a fine knowledge of orchestral technique. In its latter pages, from the Andante tranquillo section which begins midway in side 3, I think the composer expresses himself most truly, here the music has great feeling and the meditative quality that Barber has exhibited so well in his *Adagio for Strings* and *Essay No. 1* for orchestra. Barber bases his whole work on the three themes of the initial Allegro non troppo, and one suspects these themes were chosen more for their malleability than for any definite appealing qualities. Yet it must be said that the composer presents them in many lights and proves to us that they can say more some times than others. Once one has familiarized oneself with the themes and recognizes them in their various transmutations, I feel certain the symphony will have a definite appeal.

It is of interest to know that the composer wrote this work at 26, while he was a Fellow at the American Academy in Rome. Since then he has written a second symphony, dedicated to the Army Air Forces, a work which is harsher and more dissonant, suggesting the influence of the war. In my estimation, the composer speaks more succinctly

and forthrightly in this youthful score which reflects a period of creative work that knew no troublesome times. It is good to have this music recorded, for Barber is one of the most talented American composers.

The composer could hardly have asked for a more sympathetic and earnest performance than Mr. Walter gives, and the recording is exceptionally good, with better gradations of tone, particularly on the pianissimo side, than Columbia usually gives us. —P.H.R.

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 3 in F major, Opus 90*; played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, direction of Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set M or DM-1007, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ Koussevitzky's genius for orchestral virtuosity is too well known to comment upon to any length. That it serves him well in the moderns is pretty generally agreed; that it serves him equally well in some of the older scores has been proved in his readings of Haydn, Brahms, Schubert and others. One does not hear two minutes of the present recording before one becomes conscious that this is the most mettlesome reading of the work on records. There is exultation in the opening movement, the requisite bounce and rhythmic compulsion to make Brahms' sturdy opening theme something quite memorable; and the romantic second theme is deftly refined for the best of contrast. I have heard this latter sentimentalized, but Koussevitzky does not make this mistake, he gives it the proper touch of sensibility—the Brahmsian tenderness is there but it does not degenerate into languishing emotion. Koussevitzky in a way streamlines the old master, but in so doing he does not—in my estimation—misread Brahms. There are many changing moods to Brahms' *Third*; its dramatic qualities are far removed from those of the *First Symphony*, it has none of the pastoral qualities of the *Second* nor any of the austerity of the *Fourth*. It has been rightfully called his most romantic symphony, but this does not mean it is a completely sentimental work. It is cherishably lyric and splendidly passionate by turns, but it is also heroic, and few conductors realize fully its heroic connotations. There is drama in its heroic qualities and if Koussevitzky desires to stress that drama no one can gainsay him; others have done it before him, Mengelberg for one, and

even Toscanini does not refute the dramatic qualities of the score. Koussevitzky's shaping of the work is more cogent than Mengelberg's; his performance is more colorful than most conductors'.

Much of the above was occasioned by Koussevitzky's performance of the outer movements of the symphony, movements in which not enough strength is admitted by most conductors for my liking. That "influentially dramatic power" of the work, of which the late Lawrence Gilman used to talk, is recognized and given full value by Koussevitzky. If one admits to a mysterious brooding quality in the latter part of the slow movement and a mystical contemplation and serenity in the finale, as Mr. Gilman did, I think one will find Koussevitzky substantiating these qualities less than some other conductor. In the Andante it is the precision in the playing of the various instrumental choirs, the tonal coloring, that pleased me momentarily; Koussevitzky's handling of this movement is curiously individual, slow in tempo with some studied effects, achieved by ritards and pointing up of instrumentation. In sound, it substantiates the poetic beauty of the movement but it might not be accepted by all as their kind of Brahms. Curiously, his playing of this movement makes me think of that particularly cherishable work of Brahms—the *Variations on a Theme of Haydn*; there is an underlying similarity in the composer's treatment of the thematic material here. Similarly, I feel much the same about the playing of the third movement; here too the perfection of the instrumental choirs, the fine molding of the phrases with "never a slip between the cup and the lip", struck me most.

The reader may be interested in other versions of this work. Let it be said at the outset that none are as splendidly recorded—none possess the tonal bounce we find here. The most recent sets were those by Stock and the Chicago Symphony (Columbia 443) and Hans Kindler and the National Symphony (Victor 762). Stock failed to convey the full spaciousness and power of the work; and Kindler's performance was not compelling nor did it efface the memory of the admirable reading by Bruno Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic (Victor 341). Walter's performance of the inner movements is encompassed with greater subtlety and feeling,

but the recording of it is far less persuasive than the present one. Weingartner, whose performance is not too well recorded, is more constrained than Walter in emotional quality and more constrained than Koussevitzky in dramatic power. There can be no question of a doubt that the realistic quality of the reproduction here places this set well in the forefront; its tonal naturalness is a joy to hear. As to Mengelberg's, Krauss's, and Stokowski's performances, they have long been out of the running; moreover these performances were not completely satisfying summations of the score at any time.

—P.H.R.

GRETRY (Arr. Mottl): *Céphale et Procris—Airs de Ballet*; played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, direction of Désiré Defauw. Victor disc 11-8825, price \$1.00.

▲Gretry had a gift for engaging melody. Belgian born, he was adopted by the Parisians and became the father of French opéra-comique. In his day, he was called the "Molière of music", but in the light of subsequent events this praise does not seem fully qualified. The opera from which these attractive dances—Tambourin, Menuetto, and Gigue—were drawn was written in 1775; it seems to be remembered today only by these excerpts which the enterprising Viennese conductor, Felix Mottl (1856-1911), saw fit to arrange in a suite. As examples of 18th-century dance forms, these are spontaneous and enlivening with occasional touches reminiscent of Mozart and Gluck. Whether or not Mottl dressed them up more brilliantly than Grétry intended need not detain us, for they are effectively arranged.

Some listeners will recall an earlier recording of this suite which Defauw made with the Brussels Conservatory Orchestra in 1931. That recording enjoyed considerable popularity so it is both understandable and wise that he should re-record it today under more auspicious circumstances; for the Chicago Symphony is a better orchestra and the recording of Victor is especially admirable for its tonal naturalness. How delightfully the flute comes out in the Menuetto above the body of strings! Defauw plays these dances with a wholly admirable animation and spontaneity. It is good to hear the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under the direction of a competent successor to the late Frederick Stock.

—P.H.R.

SCHOENBERG: *Verklärte Nacht* (*Transfigured Night*) (Music used for the ballet *Pillar of Fire*), *Opus 4* (7 sides); and CORELLI (arr. di Filippi): *Adagio* (1 side); played by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, direction of Vladimir Golschmann. Victor set M or DM-1005, price \$4.50.

▲Someday the romantic ghost of Schoenberg's youth will meet with the acrid, academic ghost of his maturity; the ensuing dialogue would be interesting, they are so utterly opposed to each other. The youthful Schoenberg was a real romanticist imbued with the spirit of Wagner. He was twenty-five when he wrote the present work in its original form—a sextet. I have always thought the music fared best in its original chamber form; the revision for orchestra, made six years later, heightens the Wagnerian influences. Moreover, the poetic beauty and passion of the best pages of this score lose much of the intensified intimacy of the original, and the sentiment is far less com-

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elling. It must be admitted, however, that the orchestral version is largely responsible for the popularity of this music, and that probably not one out of a hundred listeners who admire the score would trade it for a recording of the sextet version.

It has always been my assumption that this music is best enjoyed apart from any programmatic connotations. But, at this late date, with the Ballet Theatre's further popularization of the music, most people will probably be unable to dissociate the music from a program. It is a moot question whether Anthony Tudor's choreography is more fitting to the music than Richard Dehmé's poem, printed on the flyleaf of the score. Both are distasteful, to my way of thinking; both are decadent and purely sentimental nonsense.

Since *Pillar of Fire*, the ballet first introduced by the Ballet Theatre in April of 1942, has found favor with many people, it is not surprising to find its name boldly featured by Victor on the cover of the album; for a new recording of Schoenberg's music this assures a wider commercial success—one is tempted to say a dual audience; for those who would not be drawn to the original may very well be drawn to *Pillar of Fire*, particularly if they have seen the ballet.

In June 1934 Victor brought out a recording of *Verklärte Nacht*, performed by Eugene Ormandy and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra (set 207). That performance was an admirable one in many ways, but as a recording it is definitely dated when compared with the present one. Golschmann proves himself a sympathetic interpreter, who wisely shuns undue stress of the agitation in the score. His interpretation is eloquent and tonally rich. To be sure, he does not succeed in making the dreary, somber pages of this protracted opus any more successful than did Mr. Ormandy, but where the music is fervent and radiantly expressive he—with the added advantage of better recording—proves himself a persuasive spokesman.

The Corelli *Adagio*, an arrangement of a movement from the Sonata, Opus 5, No. 5, originally for violin and harpsichord, loses much of its intimacy in transcription, yet retains its dignity and is worth hearing almost in any form. Mr. Golschmann affirms the eloquence and nobility of this music in a per-

formance that, to my way of thinking, remains the most enduring part of the set.

The recording, as I have already intimated, is excellently contrived. The St. Louis strings are dark-hued and rich in tone and the recorders have served them well.

—P.H.R.

STRAUSS (arr. Dorati): *Der Rosenkavalier*—*Suite*; played by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, direction of Eugene Goossens. Victor set M or DM-997, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ I am told that Goossens has worked under very trying conditions with the Cincinnati Symphony, since the auditorium in which the orchestra is heard is acoustically poorly contrived—almost barnlike—and hence often conceals the best efforts of the conductor. There are some evidences of tonal confusion in these records, but on the whole Victor's recording of the orchestra has served it and the conductor—according to one Cincinnati reader—to the best advantage. Goossens is an able conductor who seems to get much better technical and musical results from his own orchestra than he does with other ensembles when guest conducting, which is not surprising since few visiting conductors are ever given sufficient rehearsals to accomplish what they wish. Goossens has already given us several recordings substantiating his considerable abilities as a music-maker—I think immediately of his performances of Vaughan Williams' *London Symphony* and the Walton *Violin Concerto* (with Heifetz as soloist). A new series of recordings recently made by Victor will undoubtedly help further to enhance our admiration of him as a conductor.

The present recording offers a modern arrangement by the ballet conductor, Antal Dorati, of selections from Strauss's most popular opera. Although Dorati has accomplished a well connected sequence of excerpts, what he has done is not far removed from the old fashioned operatic pot-pourri. And I, for one, do not favor his arrangement entirely; his tacking on of some waltz material after the lovely closing pages of the opera may be effective from a conductor's standpoint but, in my estimation, it cheapens the ending. The material used is derived from the Prelude, the music accompanying the scene between the Marschallin

and Octavian in the first act, the Intrigue, music associated with Baron Ochs, the Scandal and Solution, the lovely Trio and Closing Duet, all of which is followed by a Résumé and the Waltz music.

Goossens handles this colorful music in an admirably straightforward manner, keeping it animated and alive. The recording is good, but there is some tonal diffusion, especially in the Trio and Closing Duet where the inner voices are frequently submerged. This may or may not be due to the acoustical qualities of the hall. Unfortunately, the diffusion gives us little opportunity to assess Goossens's sensitivity in these passages. The conductor builds up the finale with tremendous emphasis and the recording here is unusually lifelike.

—P.H.R.

Concerto

BACH: *Concerto in D minor* (for two violins); played by Adolf Busch and Frances Magnes (violins), with the Busch Chamber Players. Columbia set X or MX-253, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ In March 1938 Columbia issued a performance of this concerto played by Joseph Szigeti, Carl Flesch and an orchestra directed by Walter Goehr (set X-90). In the outer movements Adolf Busch and his young colleague, Frances Magnes, give a more exciting performance than their predecessors. Indeed, Busch substantiates the vivacity and bounce of the opening Vivace much better than any previous players; he gives life and sparkle to the contrapuntal pattern, a fine lilt, which makes the music live irresistibly and attests the inspiration of Bach, the indefatigable composer of counterpoint. Stylistically, Busch is always admirable in music of Bach's period, but not all of his performances are as smoothly and estimably encompassed as the present one. Yet, as admirably as he and his young companion play the ever lovely Largo, I still feel that Szigeti and Flesch have given a more appreciable performance. Busch's tone is thin and often brittle and there are times in the Largo when its attenuated quality is quite marked, and Miss Magnes does not have the breadth of tone of Carl Flesch. But the opening movement of the Szigeti-Flesch performance is stodgy, owing to the unresilient handling of

the orchestral accompaniment by Goehr. The Menuhin-Enesco performance does not quite equal the present one in its spirit and liveliness. Bach in his fast movements demands a definite lilt, without which the music can sound dull and even conspicuously erudite. The final Allegro is better handled by Goehr and Enesco, but I particularly like the fine molding and rounding off of the phrases by Busch and his ensemble; this despite the fact that Busch's thin violin tone comes dangerously near to making the music sound upon occasion like exercises for the fiddle.

In favor of the present players is their musical compatibility; this was not as apparent in either of the other sets mentioned above. Szigeti and Flesch were not well matched, for the transparent purity of the former's tone was not matched by the romantic warmth of Flesch's. In the case of Menuhin and Enesco, the young violinist endeavored to ape his teacher's tone, but he lacked at that time the musical assurance of the latter. To be sure, that set still remains a cherishable memento of the association of Menuhin and Enesco—the latter, in my opinion, one of the greatest musicians of our times.

The use of a harpsichord in the Szigeti-Flesch-Goehr set was one of its definite at-

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tributes; the harpsichord supplies a backbone to the orchestra of this period and the basses here, while capably handled, do not quite have that solidarity or that precision which the old keyboard instrument furnishes. But the absence of the harpsichord will not be noticed by many, for in these times we all too seldom have it included in ensemble, and since people seldom have an opportunity to find out what it can do for ensemble they naturally do not miss it. The recording here is excellently achieved.

—P.H.R.

Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in C minor, Opus 30, No. 2* (7 sides); and *Rondo in G* (1 side); played by Yehudi Menuhin (violin) and Hephzibah Menuhin (piano). Victor set M or DM-1008, four discs, price \$4.50.

▲ The three sonatas that form Opus 30 were dedicated to Czar Alexander I of Russia, and this has prompted a number of writers to agree with Vincent d'Indy that this work is essentially military in spirit as an appropriate expression to the Russian Emperor. There are unmistakable martial characteristics to the opening movement and yet I cannot accept it as an 18th-century battle piece. As one English reviewer (C. M. Crabtree if I recall correctly) remarked, if you think this music cannot be interpreted in any other way and that all music can be given a verbal program d'Indy's viewpoint will be accepted, but listened to in that way the movement becomes absurd. I must confess to having become acquainted with this music before I had read d'Indy's comments, and they have always seemed to me completely superfluous. I am rather inclined to think a definite "poetic idea" was in the composer's mind in the entire work. He left us no comments on the martial character of the opening Allegro con brio. The piquant scherzo he did not think fitted in with the rest of the work and he once talked of omitting it; perhaps the central "poetic idea" of the work, which may or may not have been a martial drama, was not carried out in his scherzo. The elated character of this movement is somewhat out of keeping with the stormy, somberly energetic first movement, the festive finale and the expressive Adagio

cantabile, which would have undeniably sounded better had the composer left it the original key of G major instead of lifting it to A flat. The *C minor* has always appealed to me as a striking work of Beethoven's first period, one in which his dramatic boldness seeks to repudiate the principals laid down by his predecessors.

That admirable brother and sister team, the Menuhins, gives a praiseworthy performance, but there was more searching feeling in the one of Busch and Serkin (Victor set 283), despite some less ingratiating violin tone from the former. I particularly like the way the older team handled the opening movement—surely they were dominated by a "poetic idea" rather than by any battle nonsense, and their playing of both the slow movement and the scherzo offered more mature artistry than we find here. While the reproduction in this set is better, it is not sufficiently so to warrant discarding the older one. The performance of the *Rondo* as an encore reminds me how much more violinists like Kreisler and Szigeti can achieve in a piece of this kind. The pace adopted in the Adagio by the Menuhins tends to drag a little, and it is this tempo that causes their recording to require seven sides whereas Busch and Serkin as well as Kreisler and Rupp (in the Society issue) took only six sides. It seems a pity that the Kreisler and Rupp performances have never been issued here; they were well worth acquiring.

—P.H.R.

Keyboard

CHOPIN: *Polonaise in A flat major, Opus 53*; played by Egon Petri (piano). Columbia 10-inch disc 17377-D, price 75c.

▲ Petri's performance of this familiar work will appeal less immediately to those who were impressed by Turbi's superficial exposition. Petri plays with fine musicianship, establishing the stateliness of the music which others tend to sacrifice in virtuosity. Admirable as his playing is, however, it leaves something to be desired in its almost unyielding straightforwardness, particularly in the first half. He is more successful in the latter half, in my estimation, despite some rhythmic jerkiness, for here he brings more

color to his playing. The student will recognize at the start how much better Petri handles the sixths, which Iturbi glided over rather sloppily. Petri's technique is always admirable, but I think he tends to treat Chopin a bit too austerely. The absence of rubato, particularly in the opening half, tends to make his interpretation needlessly severe. He rather refutes Huneker's assertion that this composition is a "type of war song" in which "there is imaginative splendor... with its thunders of horse-hoof and fierce challenges".

As an executant Petri is one of the rare musical minds of our day; his clearly defined musical ideas are always admirable for their avoidance of superficiality and mediocrity. But surely this polonaise is more heroic and exciting than he makes it. I have always found the performance of Artur Rubinstein more persuasive for its tonal coloring and profounder grasp of the national qualities of the music. But Rubinstein is a Pole, and Petri belongs to the more phlegmatic Dutch. No student would make a mistake in using this disc as a model of interpretation, although at some later date he might find it desirable to add some individual touches. Played with an ordinary needle the recording rattled considerably, but with the use of a Fidelitone Master it proved to do full justice to the pianist. This needle has proved a particular boon for eliminating chatter and rattle.

—P.H.R.

RACHMANINOFF: *Prelude in C sharp minor, Opus 3, No. 2;* and **SHOSTAKOVICH:** *Three Preludes from Opus 34;* played by William Kapell (piano). Victor disc 11-8824, price \$1.00.

▲ Clean technic and youthful enthusiasm are qualities appreciated in any pianist. To say that Kapell effaces the memory of Rachmaninoff playing that famous prelude which he must more than once have regretted writing would be stretching a point. Mr. Kapell plays it with more enthusiasm than many older men would today; he plays it as though he likes it, with some ideas of his own with which others may well disagree. I don't think that Rachmaninoff's own recording of it shows any more or even as much enthusiasm. But then I have long outlived any ad-

miration of this music and for that reason I do not feel qualified to make the type of comparison someone more interested might.

The three *Preludes* by Shostakovich are modern keyboard whimsies that say very little to me. The wide-open stretches between the two hands give an emptiness to the music; the composer seems to be trying to be clever but the material he uses is inconsequential. The three pieces are not identified on the record label; they are No. 24 in D minor, No. 10 in C sharp minor and No. 5 in D major. These pieces hardly give us any true idea of Kapell's accomplishments as an artist. He plays them intelligently and cleanly. The recording is admirable.

—P.H.R.

RUSSIAN MUSIC FOR TWO PIANOS:

Dance of the Tumblers from *Snegourotchka* and *Cradle Song* from *Sadko* (Rimsky-Korsakoff, arr. Babin); *Waltz from Suite, Opus 15* (Arensky); *Russian Village* (Babin); *Tango and Circus Polka* (Stravinsky, arr. Babin); played by Vitya Vronsky and Victor Babin (duo-pianists). Columbia set M-576, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ There is dependability in the performances of these two artists and a certain quality that I should be inclined to call informality which makes their playing most appealing. I find their playing of the popular Arensky *Waltz* and the *Russian Village* especially likable. The latter is a modern peasant song which Babin obtained in 1943 on a disc from Soviet Russia; it intrigued him and so many of his friends and neighbors that he decided

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to arrange it for two pianos. The song has a characteristic force which makes it immediately attractive, and I feel that many listeners will applaud Babin's arrangement. The Rimsky-Korsakoff excerpts lose a great deal in two piano transcription; it is like taking some of the colorful paintings of Bakst and rendering them in black and white. The two Stravinsky pieces are typical. The *Tango*, originally for voice and piano, is original and far removed from any Latin-American examples of this particular dance form. The *Circus Polka*, subtitled "for a young elephant", is too realistic for its own good; the elephant lumbers and halts and proves himself completely ungainly without ever giving the listener a real chuckle.

Considerable rattle was found in the recording on both a magnetic and a crystal pickup with an ordinary needle; once again the Fidelitone Master saved the day and proved that the recording was lifelike and worthy of the artists.

—P.H.R.

Voice

HERBERT: *Italian Street Song* from *Naughty Marietta*, and HERBERT (arr. Stothart): *Summer Serenade*, based on *Badinage* from *Sweethearts*; sung by Jeanette MacDonald (soprano), with orchestra conducted by Maximilian Pilzer. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1134, price 75c.

▲ Miss MacDonald sang the *Italian Street Song* for Victor back in 1935 (disc 24896). Knowing her earlier record, I wish she had not re-recorded it; for this new version lacks some of the verve and vocal ease of the older one. Although Victor Herbert never intended his *Badinage* to be a song, it must be admitted the Hollywood vocal arrangement turns out to be an effective number, particularly for a singer like Miss MacDonald who possesses the requisite high tones. The orchestra accompaniments and the recording here are both competently handled.

—P.G.

ROSE: *Holiday for Strings*, and *Our Waltz*; sung by James Melton (tenor), with orchestra conducted by Al Goodman, and with chorus in the last. Victor 10-inch, 10-1172 price 75c.

▲ Melton has repeatedly sung the vocal arrangement of David Rose's *Holiday for Strings* and the companion piece on the radio, yet neither song in our estimation serves to display his voice at its best. Those who are not in agreement with us will probably welcome this disc, which is excellently recorded.

—P.G.

VILLA-LOBOS: *Bachianas Brasileiras*, No. 5—*Cantilena*; sung by Bidu Sayao (soprano), with eight cellos and bass—solo cello by Leonard Rose, conducted by Heitor Villa-Lobos. Columbia disc 71670-D, price \$1.00.

▲ The title is misleading, for in his *Bachianas Brasileiras* Villa-Lobos did not so much attempt to combine the style of Bach with the native rhythms of Brazil as to pay a tribute to Bach. These compositions show his interest in Bach, but there is no imitation. It will be recalled by many that Victor brought out a chamber suite, No. 1 of the *Bachianas Brasileiras* in its album 773. The present composition is a florid one, the opening and closing section of which are in the manner of a vocalise; the center section has some Portuguese words. Not speaking the language, I have no idea what the song is about, and this in a way spoils it for me. Accepting it wholly as a vocalise, I find it has charm and true poetic beauty, but one would like to know a little more about the words. The scoring for dark-hued strings shows individuality, and the solo cello furnishes a well contrasted foil for the light soprano tones of the singer. This music is ingeniously made, and it is both colorful and rhythmically interesting.

Bidu Sayao employs her lovely voice with almost too much ease in her singing here; many of her upper tones are floated without any body under them, with the result that her vocal line seems to be at times a detached aura above the plangent quality of the strings. To my way of thinking, a singer with fuller tones and more spontaneity of purpose would have served this song better. Yet, Miss Sayao is ever the admirable musician. Mr. Rose plays the solo cello expressively and the composer supplies authenticity to the background. The recording posed no problems.

—P.H.R.

WAGNER: *Tristan and Isolde—Prelude to Act I* (3 sides), *Isolde's Narrative and Curse* (3 sides), *Prelude to Act III* (2 sides), and *Liebested* (2 sides); Helen Traubel (soprano), and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, conducted by Artur Rodzinski. Columbia set M or MM-573, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ Columbia's first Traubel set presents the soprano in selections from a role she assumed at the Metropolitan Opera after Flagstad's return to her native land. Traubel has grown in her portrayal of Isolde and the impression she conveys here is that of a singer long familiar with the role. Comparisons with past Isoldes will of course be made, but Mme. Traubel establishes herself firmly as an Isolde to be reckoned with, with enough of the grand manner to provide the essential majesty. One feels, as a friend of mine put it, that one has got his money's worth when he hears her performance. Flagstad, at her best, had a greater vocal ease, and an ability to phrase in some places more subtly. Frieda Leider, my favorite Isolde, did not have the breadth of tone of either of these singers but she had a surging vocal warmth, a passionate fervor that stirred one deeply.

Mme. Traubel is in excellent form here, but it cannot be contended that everything she undertakes comes to the ears with equal quality. The richness and beauty of her middle voice is not matched by her upper range; the tone at the top of the scale is compressed, frequently hard driven, and although often effective in a flashy way it lacks the beauty of sound that Flagstad could summon with such ease. In the *Narrative and Curse*, Mme. Traubel is superb; this is the music allotted to a troubled, angry woman, and her changing moods are conveyed with dramatic emphasis by the singer. Perhaps some will find that she does not entirely efface the memory of Leider's singing of the scene, a recording that was more complete because the responses of Brangaene were included. But Mme. Traubel has the benefit of modern recording with an orchestral accompaniment which does full justice to her vocal artistry.

In the *Liebested*, Mme. Traubel tends to be more deliberate than most singers; her Isolde at the end of the opera has always seemed to me too healthy, vocally almost too

athletic. The expression of ecstasy beginning with the lines "Heller schallend, mich umwallend" is too dramatically intense, it has not the true exaltation, yet the singer's musical response to this whole scene is both admirable and impressive.

Rodzinski's contribution to the set is wholly praiseworthy; the playing is clean and estably enunciated even if interpretatively it lacks the spellbinding qualities of more imaginative conductors. Tonally, the reproduction is realistic but the dynamics are not too well handled, almost all of the pianissimi being too loud. Although Rodzinski has better recording and perhaps the better orchestra, his performance of the *Prelude to Act III* does not supersede Walter's recording of this music (Columbia disc 69805-D). Walter gets closer to the heart of the music, yet Rodzinski is served better tonally even though the pianissimi here are never below a mezzo forte. A word in praise of Michel Nazzi's English horn solo should be added. But as admirably as he plays his solo, I still think it is too long for its own good.

Some fuzziness was found in the recording on first playing, but a change of needle brought better results. The music has been very generously spaced: the *Prelude to Act I* should have gone on two sides, and the *Liebested* should have occupied a single face. However, it must be admitted that better reproduction will probably be obtained on the majority of machines with less crowded recording.

—P.H.R.

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Enrico Caruso

(Continued from page 17)

biographers of performing musicians should follow. The importance of a complete list such as this cannot be overestimated. The printed word can never match the phonograph in re-creating the performances of a great musician whose art is no longer an actuality. The material with which Mr. Caidin introduces his excellent discography is not entirely satisfactory inasmuch as it shows confusion about the facts of the earliest Caruso recordings. Also, he might have made it clear, I think, that the prices mentioned are those that a dealer would be likely to charge, and that in many cases slightly used copies may be found for less than his minimum of one dollar.

In Chapter Six, Dorothy Caruso devotes some interesting pages to Caruso's experiences as a recording artist. Adding, incidentally, to the confusion surrounding the dates of her husband's earliest records. I should like to know, for example, on what facts she bases her statement on page 138 that "he had already experimented in Italy in 1896 on wax cylinders and a recording machine that was sent down from Germany." During the recording the primitive machine broke down and another had to be sent from Berlin. In 1898 he made other recordings for a small Italian company which was later taken over by Victor." Caruso may well have made cylinders in 1896 and I, for one, would like to know more about them. The "other recordings" referred to must have been the ten-inch discs made by The International Zonophone Company which was, in fact, swallowed up by the Victor-Gramophone combine about 1903. However, they could not have been made as early as 1898 because The International Zonophone Company did not come into existence until 1901. As for the Pathé recordings, they too are often dated as early as 1898, and, while their origin is somewhat mysterious, my opinion is that the year 1903 would actually be nearer the mark.

Mrs. Caruso's book cannot take precedence over the Key-Zirato biography (long out of print), which is a complete, chronological account of Caruso's life, but admirers of the great tenor will welcome it nevertheless be-

cause it reveals such personal "inside" information about their idol. Those who seek an exposition of Caruso the artist will be as disappointed as those who expect to find reading this book a literary experience. Personally, I enjoyed it more often than I was annoyed by the form of its presentation. Too, being a record collector, I rejoice in the thorough, scientific discography and in the remarks about Caruso the recording singer.

Experiments with Needle Points

(Continued from page 6)

about 400 double-faced 12" records for the .0017" radius to about 1000 for the .0030" radius. This life, of course, has been determined without any adjustment of tone controls to reduce the highs. The life can be seemingly extended by removing the high frequencies, distortion of which creeps in first. The average commercial phonographs, particularly those which advertise lifetime needles in their pickups, are designed to filter the highs. A phonograph does not begin to impose the limitations described herein until really high fidelity of reproduction becomes the goal.

Voice of the Wizard

(Continued from page 9)

American People," was extremely brief and boiled down to an admonition that Mr. Edison felt other Allied nations besides the United States were entitled to credit for helping win the war against Germany, and that he believed the national airs of England, Italy, Belgium and France should in future be inseparably associated with those of our country. On the reverse side of the disc, the New York Military Band played a medley of Allied Nations' national anthems.

The record created no particular stir, but until the Edison company quit the phonograph business in October 1929, most Blue Amberol supplements contained the inquiry, "Does your collection contain 'Let Us Not Forget,' the only record of Mr. Edison's voice?" Presumably this was intended as a reminder to the folks who had called so long for the Voice of the Wizard that if they still wanted it they could have it.

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